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ABSTRACT

The World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) has been held every 3 years since 1987. The conference brings together indigenous peoples from around the world to share their similar struggles to improve indigenous education. The first five conferences were held in British Columbia, New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii, and New Mexico. In August 2002, the sixth conference drew 2,500 people to the Nakoda Nation Reserve near Morley, Alberta, Canada. The conference aimed to celebrate the sharing of indigenous-based initiatives by featuring holistic educational efforts to maintain and perpetuate indigenous ways of knowing and promote the positive development of indigenous communities. The cultures and traditions of the indigenous nations present were honored through ceremonies, evening cultural exchanges and performances, and incorporation of the teachings and experiences of Elders in various workshops and activities. As indigenous peoples strive to gain greater autonomy in their everyday lives, to exercise control over the education of their children, and to overcome the effects of colonialism, presenters were encouraged to share how they are implementing the provisions of the Coolongata Statement on Indigenous Rights. Representatives from New Zealand, Canada, Australia, and the United States established the new World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium to provide an international forum for pursuing common goals through higher education. These goals include the articulation of indigenous epistemology, protection of spiritual beliefs, advancement of the status and well-being of indigenous peoples, and creation of an indigenous accreditation body. (SV)

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Sharing Our Pathways

A newsletter of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative
Alaska Federation of Natives • University of Alaska • National Science Foundation • Rural School and Community Trust
VOL 7, ISSUE 4
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by Ac'arralek Lolly Sheppard Carpluk

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Who is this child named WIPCE?

by Ac'arralek Lolly Sheppard Carpluk

Who is this child named WIPCE (pronounced wip-see)? It is the coming together of the youth, youthless (in-betweens) and Elders of the world's indigenous peoples, according to its founder, Dr. Verna J. Kirkness. The very first World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) was held in North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada in 1987. The 1987 conference theme was "Tradition, Change and Survival." Tradition represented by the past and the Elders; Change represented by the present and the youthless and Survival represented by the future and the youth. There were participants from 17 countries, with a total of 1,500 people attending the 1987 WIPCE.

WIPCE 2002 Alaska participants peek out the door of a teepee after dance practice. Top L to R: Olga Pestrikoff, Lolly Carpluk, Virginia Ned, Bernice Tetpon, Caroline Tritt-Frank. Bottom L to R: Florence Newman, Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle, Nita Rearden, Cecilia Martz, Julie Knagin.

Dr. Verna J. Kirkness equated WIPCE to being a child who was born in Xwmelch'sten, North Vancouver, Canada—a difficult and laborious birth, she recalls. From there WIPCE was nurtured and suckled at Turangawaewae Marae, Aotearoa (New Zealand) in 1990 on its third birthday and then on to Wollongong, Australia for its sixth birthday in 1993. WIPCE's ninth birthday was spent in arid Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1996 and in 1999 WIPCE was really happy to spend its twelfth birthday in Hilo, Hawai'i. This year's host for

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WIPCE's fifteenth birthday was the First Nations Adult and Higher Education Consortium (FNAHEC). The conference drew 2500 people to the beautiful site of Stoney Park on the Nakoda Nation Reserve near Morley, Alberta, Canada.

I had no idea what to expect when I attended my first WIPCE in Albuquerque in 1996. I had no clue that I would share similar struggles in education with like-minded indigenous peoples who soon became friends from across the world. Little did I expect to network with indigenous people who had developed models of education and a way of thinking that were the beginnings of turning indigenous education around. Little did I expect to participate in celebrations of who we are as indigenous peoples with dancing, singing and, most important of all, the sense of humor that pulls us through all of life and its challenges. All this happened and more.

Workshops and presentations were held in over 60 teepees sprawled out over a field at WIPCE 2002 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

The sharing of models and ideas flourished with the attendance of over 5000 people at the Fifth World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education hosted by the Hawaiians in Hilo, Hawaii in 1999. So, too, the networking and connections continued with the Sixth World Indigenous Conference on Education in Stoney Park. The WIPCE 2002 mission statement stated that we would celebrate "the sharing and promoting of indigenous-based initiatives by featuring holistic educational efforts to maintain and perpetuate our ways of knowing and to actualize the positive development of indigenous communities."

The conference objectives supported the mission statement by providing a means for indigenous nations to honor their cultures and traditions by recognizing, respecting and taking pride in respective unique practices. The conference opening and closing ceremonies, the daily sunrise ceremony, the evening cultural exchanges and performances and the many workshops provided the means to achieve these valuable experiences. In addition, the conference provided a continuation of dialogue and action around educational issues that indigenous nations face, as well as a forum for international exchanges and the promotion of experiential teachings that actively involved all conference participants.

We honored and recognized the teachings of our Elders by incorporating their experiences in the various workshops and activities. The conference organizers sought to strengthen and continue the WIPCE legacy that indigenous peoples gain greater autonomy over their everyday lives and strive to overcome the effects of colonialism. Presenters were encouraged to share how they are implementing the provisions articulated in the *Coolongata Statement on Indigenous*

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Rights in Education that was adopted at the 1999 WIPCE in Hilo.

FNAHEC was founded on the belief that the realization of cultural identity is essential to the development of the self-actualized person. So it was their intention that hosting the world conference would enable them to "bring about greater unity and co-operative action to make our world the place that our creator intended it to be." The conference brought educators together from around the world to provide opportunities for collaborative initiatives. A challenge in hosting the conference was to make the circle larger by bringing representatives from countries that had not previously participated. Thus the conference included people from Central America and Samiiland.

Elder Julie Knagin giving her presentation at the "virtual teepee". WIPCE 2002, Stoney Park, Calgary, Alberta.

The WIPCE 2002 logo was drawn by Allen B. Wells from the Kainai Blood Nation in Alberta. His logo captured the proud spirit of First Nations heritage and the attainment of education. The peace pipe stood as a spiritual symbol of our cultural beliefs, a gift from the Great Spirit. Within the circle was a teepee, the meeting and learning place from which emanates the knowledge for living that is passed on from generation to generation. The mountains in the background represented the spiritual essence of our culture. They also formed the beautiful backdrop for the chosen venue of WIPCE 2002—the land of the Nakoda Nation. The feathers represented the four seasons flowing in perpetual motion—the Circle of Life. Also, embodied within the meaning of the feathers is the Great Spirit above whom has blessed us with spiritual, mental, physical and emotional balance to live in harmony within His creation.

WIPCE 2002 began on a cold, gray day nestled in a clearing surrounded by poplar and pine trees, with the majestic Rocky Mountains in the background and the beginnings of the Bow River as it flowed from the mountain range out into the prairie lands that surround Calgary. We, from many international indigenous nations, huddled together for warmth on bleachers as we listened to the opening ceremonies. The largest contingencies came from Hawai'i and Aotearoa, with more than 100 from each nation. There were about 30 people from Alaska, a majority of whom are involved with the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, either as employees or memorandum-of-agreement (MOA) partners.

On Monday, Tuesday and Friday, workshops and presentations were held in over 60 teepees sprawled out over a field that is also gopher and grasshopper habitat. We either walked or rode on golf carts from the entrance to our destinations. Most of the teepees had no electrical outlets which presented a challenge for those who came with Powerpoint presentations or had planned to use transparencies. As a result, we truly relied on traditional methods of sharing through our oral tradition. It made for a startling jolt from the taken-for-granted modern technology that we have become accustomed to. But by the end of the week everyone was comfortable with this type of presenting, because it seemed to encourage more interaction. We were taken to a time where we had to listen with our ears, eyes, minds, hearts and souls.

The Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative representatives and MOA partners put on a joint presentation with a delegation of Native Hawaiians from the Kahuawaiola Teacher Education Program in Hilo. This presentation was held in a virtual teepee (outdoors on the ground), and it was appropriate since it accommodated a large audience. Part of the Alaskan group held a dance practice in one of the teepees before the joint presentation, as we didn't want to be out-done by the Hawaiians with traditional dances. Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle and Nita Rearden each lead an Iñupiaq and a Yup'ik dance, respectively. Over the last two years there has been an intense exchange and networking between the Alaskan and Hawaiian Native education groups around the development of cultural standards, which was the theme of our three-hour presentation. This is a great partnership that is sure to continue with the development and exchange of models and ideas to improve education.

A group of us attended a workshop presented by Graham Smith of the University of Auckland in which he shared recent developments among the Maori in Aotearoa (New Zealand). He discussed at length a theory of transformative action during which he shared that the Te Kohanga Reo (language nests) served as a flagship for a new mindset of indigenous peoples realizing that the movement to integrate indigenous language and culture was an affirmation of self-determination. As indigenous peoples we are cognizant that our languages and cultures are parallel to and on par with those of the colonizers and thus we do not need external endorsement that our culture is valid and something we should be proud of. This

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realization has now reached to all levels of education and is having an impact on everything from infant to tertiary (postsecondary) institutions.

Another presentation that we attended was lead by Pita Sharples of Auckland, Aotearoa. He presented a rationale and strategy for the development of a Maori Education Authority, where there would be a Maori education minister with joint responsibility for the coordination of all Maori education programs. He wanted feedback from the audience on this concept as a way to exercise greater self determination and to increase Maori control over Maori education.

Virginia Ned and I led a workshop on "Promoting an Indigenous Perspective in Research." I discussed my personal journey in becoming an indigenous researcher, with help from Dr. Linda Smith of Aotearoa, Victoria and Alice Brown of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. I discussed the benefits of doing a community research assessment and how I would like to go about it. I believe each Native community is at a different level in their journey to accepting research from an indigenous perspective. Virginia presented her preliminary study of research that has been conducted in the Interior Athabascan region. The results from her study are extensive and very interesting and should be shared with Native peoples throughout Alaska. All the participants were interested in finding out more about further work on indigenous perspectives in research.

On Wednesday and Thursday, we had the opportunity to participate in cultural and educational tours. A group of us went on the Sikoka [illegible] Where Treaty Number 7 was signed

The significance of the setting was felt spiritually and moved a group of Maori who were on the same tour to lead a prayer and blessing. We were treated to a wonderful feast and powwow.

WIPCE 2002 gave birth to a new organization, the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC). The declaration establishing WINHEC states that, "as indigenous peoples of the world, we recognize and reaffirm the educational rights of all indigenous peoples, and we share the vision, united in the collective synergy of self-determination through control of higher education." [illegible] The members of the [illegible] to further [illegible] education. This was a historic moment, bringing together indigenous higher education representatives from all the indigenous regions represented at the conference to support the creation of this new organization.

The concluding comments by the five representatives of past WIPCE organizing committees gave us a clearer picture of what WIPCE has been and will continue to be—the rebirth of indigenous peoples realization that our language and culture will always define who we are, and it is our right and responsibility to make sure this is passed on to future generations. Thus it was appropriate that Dr. Verna Kirkness equated WIPCE with a child, for the rebirth of indigenous peoples education began with the infant in the language nest and has grown to nurture the full potential of [illegible] that child, it has been a time of cel-

our language and culture will always define who we are, and it is our right and responsibility to make sure this is passed on to future generations.

ebrating learning, celebrating cultures, celebrating our ancestors, celebrating who we are and celebrating our goals and aspirations. As Verna pointed out, it has also been a time to share our knowledge, a time to give thanks to the Creator and even a time of romance, not only among the young but among the old(er) as well.

That child's image has been molded by each nation that has hosted the conference, helping us to continually discover new ways to move beyond being merely guests in someone else's educational system. We need to better define who we are and continue to highlight what is indigenous about WIPCE. As the Elders have taught us, it is important to [illegible] and from the [illegible] to the [illegible] may be reborn into good thoughts. Dr. Bob Morgan of Australia pointed out that Elders are our pathway to the past and the youth are the custodians of the future. As the WIPCE child has grown, there have been themes of cultural affirmation by performances and ceremonies, exchange of ideas and materials where we learn from each other and develop connections between and among nations, strengthening and reinvigorating ourselves in an open forum, networking and sharing so that the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts, celebration and renewal for all to love being indigenous and thankfulness that we are going home with full hearts to take the learning and growth to our families.

In looking to the future of the WIPCE child, Dr. Kirkness [illegible]

We can create a path of harmony for our young people and we can create institutions that celebrate our advocacy for indigenous education. We are fortunate to have our Elders who can guide us in our return to our traditional language, laws, values, beliefs and rituals that will be at the center of the rebirth, rebuilding and recreating of our institutions for tomorrow.

As this year's theme stated, the answers are going to have to come from within us. Our traditions will show us how to cleanse our souls and our minds to deal with finding the answers. Harold Cardinal reminded us that we have to look deep within ourselves as we review our past to create the most successful institutions for our future, so they will bring harmony to our nations, as well as to the rest of the world.

The Maori, to whom [illegible] news was shared. It is appropriate that the WIPCE child return to Aotearoa, since the Maori have created models of education for the whole child. We will try our very best to be patient for the year 2005 to arrive, when we can all join in another open forum of renewal and celebrations.

I would like to thank the Nakoda Nation and FNAHEC, on behalf of the Alaska contingency, for the wonderful and loving care you shared with us in hosting WIPCE 2002. As I was leaving the bus that took a small group of us to the Calgary airport, the nine year old girl that accompanied her mom (who was the bus driver) gave me a pin that said, "Make the Circle Stronger." So, as the WIPCE logo incorporates the Circle of Life, may we continue to be blessed with spiritual, mental, physical and emotional [illegible] live in harmony with [illegible]

WINHEC Formed At WIPCE

by Merritt Helfferich

AIHEC, CANHE/Alaska, New Zealand, Australia and Canada representatives established the new World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) at the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) in Stoney Park, Alberta. The WINHEC was started with a pledge of NZ$500,000 for the first year. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation will consider a grant of $200,000 for the planning and initial operation activities of WINHEC. The declaration that was signed by WIPCE delegates to establish WINHEC is as follows:

Declaration On Indigenous People's Higher Education

On this day, August 3, 2002, in Kananaskis Village, Alberta, Canada, we gather as indigenous peoples of our respective nations recognizing and reaffirming the educational rights of all indigenous peoples. We share the vision of indigenous peoples of the world united in the collective strength of self-determination through the channel of higher education. We commit to building partnerships that create and retain indigenous spirituality, [illegible]

We do hereby convene the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium. This consortium will provide an international forum and support for indigenous peoples to pursue common goals through higher education. By our signatures, we agree to:

1. Accelerate the articulation of indigenous epistemology (ways of knowing, education, philosophy, and research);
2. Protect and enhance indigenous spiritual beliefs, culture and languages through higher education;
3. Advance the social, economical, and political status of indigenous peoples that contribute to the well-being of indigenous communities through higher education;
4. Create an accreditation body for indigenous education initiatives and systems that identify common criteria, practices and principles by which indigenous peoples live;
5. Recognize the significance of indigenous education;
6. Create a global network for sharing knowledge through exchange forums and state of the art technology and
7. Recognize the educational rights of indigenous peoples.

In the spirit of ancestors and generations to come, we hereby affix our signatures below. [signed by over 100 WIPCE participants]

The initial signing took place at a ceremony outside the Delta Lodge in Kananaskis Village, Alberta where signatures were affixed to the charter [illegible]

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